

**2009 ADE/CEF Promising Practices Awards
Part I: Cover Sheet**

Practice Name Character Education Three Minutes a Day
Name of Principal Dr. Devon Isherwood
Official School Name Eisenhower Elementary School
School Mailing Address 848 N. Mesa Drive Tel. () 480-472-5200 ext. _____
School Website www2.mpsaz.org/eisenhower
Mesa 85201 Email Address dlisherw@mpsaz.org
City Zip

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate. If my program is recognized as a Promising Practice the contents of this application may be made available to the public.

Dr. Devon Isherwood Date 11/24/08
(Principal's signature)

Name of Superintendent Dr. Debra Duvall
District Name Mesa Public Schools Tel. () 480-472-0200
District Mailing 63 E. Main St. #101
Mesa 85201 Email Address dllduvall@mpsaz.org
City Zip

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

Debra Duvall Date 11/24/08
(Superintendent's signature)

2009 ADE/CEF Promising Practices Awards

Part II: Background Information

1. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☒ Urban or large central city ☐ Suburban
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
☐ Small city or town in a rural area ☐ Rural

2. 1 yr. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

8 yrs If less than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

3. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school building:

Pre-K <u>121</u>	5th <u>76</u>	10th _____
1st <u>61</u>	6th <u>74</u>	11th _____
2nd <u>97</u>	7th _____	12th _____
3rd <u>81</u>	8th _____	
4th <u>80</u>	9th _____	
		TOTAL: <u>590</u>

4. Limited English proficient students in the school: 63 % 372 Total Number

Number of languages represented: 5 Specify languages: Spanish, Swahili, French, kikuya, Grabo

5. Students who participate in free/reduced-priced meals: 88 % 519 Total Number

If this method is not a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

Character Education Three Minutes a Day

Quick! Easy! Fun! That describes the character education practice---developed, written, and implemented by Eisenhower Elementary School staff. One-minute dialogue scripts read over the morning announcements by two, sometimes three students, precede two-minute follow-up class discussions. The dialogue scripts present ten traits, a new character trait each month, which include the six pillars of character---respect, responsibility, caring, trustworthiness, fairness and citizenship---plus attitude, effort, self-control, and courtesy.

Students hear bits of character building information through the one-minute dialogues. The scripts contain a touch of fun with references to items like donuts, iguanas, and bubblegum. Conversational style topics include subjects elementary students identify with---brothers and sisters, home or school situations, and familiar children's stories. Spiced up Readers Theatre style dialogue scripts with four students readers are televised school wide on Fridays.

Classroom teachers select second through sixth grade students of character to be character announcers. Occasionally first graders and kindergarteners get into the act by saying a single phrase or two of the message. Any students of character may be selected including---second language, Special Ed., shy, academically struggling, or students with speech difficulties. Our school counselor trains the students---usually at recess---by having them read over their script. Over the last five years, numerous students have participated in reading the character messages, usually each school day but at other times approximately every other school day.

Following the one-minute message, the classroom teacher or a student---any student, not just a student of character---conducts the follow-up two-minute discussion. Written discussion guides lead students to discuss how the message applies to their own situations. Students are encouraged to reflect on one specific action they can take to build their character that day.

Our three-minute practice enables students to develop good character in these ways: 1)
The dialogue scripts teach missing character traits to some students and enhance existing traits

for others. 2) Character on campus has status! Students often ask, even plead, to be selected as character announcers. Because students have a buy-in to the program, they enjoy displaying the character traits. 3) Sometimes a teacher selects a student to be a character announcer who may have made a slight, even brief, positive turnaround in behavior. Often this encourages the student to continue improving in character. 4) Students (and parents) feel honored when chosen as character announcers. Self-esteem increases. Positive connections with parents develop.

The decreasing number of students who are on school behavior plans is one indication of the impact of our character education practice. In the last six years, the number has decreased by about two-thirds from 36 in 2002-03 to 13 in 2007-08. Our three minutes of character training is one factor in this decrease of disruptive student behaviors.

Observations also reveal the impact. One staff member observed, "Simple acts of kindness, reinforced by the character messages, create a warm campus climate." Other teachers reported: "The daily announcements remind us to start each day with a positive thought and actions." "The little stories and examples really help to illustrate and define the character traits for our students." "The students are developing listening, questioning, and leadership skills through the messages and discussions." An office staff member said, "It's wonderful! The students smile and feel such an accomplishment. Parents have such pride and happiness."

One parent said, "I see my children at home using positive behaviors. Words in their conversations are uplifting." Another parent said, "I have noticed that the character education has given my children words to express their emotions."

A student said, "They show me how to be a better person." Another, "I'm proud I am going to be on the announcements." A sixth grade student said, "More people focus on the donut and not on the hole." One student said, "They have made almost no bullies and have made kids nice and friendly."

Well, maybe we will always have a bully or two left to reach!